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## Technology and bullying

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Middle School: New Environment and New Challenges

# Technology and Bullying

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2011

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**Abstract**

With the advancement in technology, students have become more susceptible to cyberbullying. Through mediums related to social networking sites, cell phones, and other virtual platforms, more than ever students are faced with the new ways of bullying. The project was created in an attempt to determine if bullying was an issue that local middle school students faced. The project was situated in Los Arboles Middle School in Marina, California and the deliverables that came out of the project were the results of a sixth grade population survey, an awareness program, and a written reflection by all participants in the program. Upon completion, the project has shown how local sixth grade middle school students are affected and handle issues related to bullying.

### **Backstory**

Have you been the victim of cruel, painful bullying? Have you ever been the target of aggressive, intentional, and repeated name-calling and teasing? Have you ever been involved in an imbalance of power and strength? If you have answered yes to any or all of the above questions, then you have been the victim to bullying. According to Behen (2001), bullying is described as “aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take many forms, such as hitting or punching, teasing or name-calling, intimidation through gestures, social exclusion and sending or posting insulting messages or pictures by cellphone or online” (p. 6). In my opinion, bullying is an important issue that I am passionate about because there are so many different aspects that contribute to the problem especially because of time period that we live in. Physical, verbal, emotional, relational, and technological bullying are many different ways of bullying, but for my capstone project I plan on focusing in on technology and bullying in the middle school context.

I am so passionate about the issue of bullying, and technology and bullying in particular, because my youngest cousin has been consistently bullied for the past few years. Her first experience with bullies occurred when she was in the fifth grade when she was emotionally and verbally bullied. It has escalated throughout the past three years to relational and technological bullying.

My youngest cousin’s name is Riley and she is currently a 13-year-old seventh grader at a local private school. The school Riley attends is pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. Riley was held back and had to repeat the second grade, and therefore the peers with whom she started off her educational career are not the same students that she is now has as classmates+.

Riley's story begins during her fifth grade year. Riley and her group of friends, Brianna and Ashley, have started to form crushes and for Riley her crush is a fellow fifth grader named Jay. Riley's closest friends, Ashley and Brianna, start telling fellow classmates that Riley has a crush on Jay. In response, Jay starts picking on Riley. He starts teasing Riley everyday on the schoolyard and even called Riley a 'bitch' three separate times in one school day. Riley goes to her teacher and Riley's teacher tells her that there is not much that she can do because Jay already received a misconduct slip for the day for a separate offense. The teasing continued. A few weeks later, Riley broke her hand and came to school with a cast. That day Riley was continually teased, verbally and physically, and although Riley continuously told her teacher what was going on, nothing was done about it. A few days later, the bullying was at an all-time high and Riley had had enough. Riley went to go punch Jay with her injured hand, but she had swung and missed. A teacher saw Riley do this on the schoolyard and she had got in trouble. When Riley tried to explain why she had done it, the teacher explained that she did not see Jay do anything therefore; again, there was nothing that she could do about it. After this incident, the bullying stopped for the remainder of Riley's fifth grade year.

The bullying started up again during Riley's sixth grade year when a new student enrolled named Priscilla. Priscilla immediately targeted Riley and verbally bullied her from the start of the sixth grade through the end of sixth grade. Priscilla consistently told Riley rude comments and would tell Riley every day that she looked like a 'dog'. Priscilla would even make fun of Riley's family members and she once told Riley that her grandmother was 'ugly'. Priscilla would constantly verbally bully Riley and Riley would consistently report the incidents to her parents as well as her teachers, but the teachers would not do anything about it. Riley's mother eventually went to the principal, Mrs. Taft, but she also responded that there was little that she

could do about the situation. Riley ended up retaliating, again, against her bullies. This time one of Riley's closest friends turned her into the teacher and Riley got in trouble for her action while the consistent verbal bullying done by Priscilla continued to go unnoticed. The second half of Riley's sixth grade year was filled with verbal bullying by many of the boys in her class. At the end of the calendar school year, Riley's mother sent an email to Mrs. Taft as well as the seventh grade teachers requesting that the boys and girls that had bullied Riley in the previous years be placed in classes other than Riley's class. Riley's mom requested this so that her daughter could be left alone. Despite the request put in by Riley's mom, a few of the boys that bullied Riley were placed in her classroom for her seventh grade year.

Riley started off her seventh grade year relatively bully-free until one morning when she received a text message early in the morning. The text message was from Brianna, one of the few girls that Riley was close with. The text message read: "forward: you have to send to ten people or you will be bullied for the rest of your life and the principal won't do anything about it and the boy you've always hated will be the boy you love". Riley immediately showed the text message to her older sister, Shelby. Shelby and Riley read the text message together and knew that it was not a true forwarded chain text message. The contents of the message hit close to home to Riley because Brianna was one of the only people that knew what had been done to Riley during the past few years. Immediately, Shelby and Riley called their mother and explained the situation to her. Riley's mother requested that the text message be resent to her. Riley's mother called and set up a meeting with her, Riley's father, Mrs. Taft, and the vice-principal, Mr. Thomas. Between this time and the time of the scheduled meeting, Riley found out that the text message had been written up by Brianna, Ashley, and Priscilla and was sent to Riley from Brianna's phone. When Riley's parents met up with Mrs. Taft and Mr. Thomas, they explained that they couldn't do

anything about the incident because it did not happen on the school grounds. Riley's mother was outraged and upset. She explained that Riley had been continuously bullied on the school grounds for the past 3 years, the school knew about the incidents, yet nothing was done to stop it. The principal remained adamant that there was nothing that she could do. Mr. Thomas finally gave in and decided to suspend Brianna, Ashley, and Priscilla for one day each. The next day Riley arrived at school and was greeted by Brianna running into her. Brianna threw a bag of cookies at Riley and explained to her that her mother wanted her to give them to Riley as a type of sorry gift.

The impact of the verbal, physical, relational, and technological bullying have been completely detrimental to Riley. When Riley repeated the second grade, she developed a love for learning, a love for the school environment, and a love for putting her all into everything that she did. After her many bullying incidents, Riley's love for everything involving the school environment and its people completely disappeared. School is no longer a place that Riley feels safe because of the constant bullying, discrimination, and hate that she has had to deal with. Riley does not feel a connection with any of her teachers because none of them would protect her when she went to them for protection and help. The bullying the Riley has dealt with throughout the past three years has changed her forever.

I too have been changed forever after hearing Riley's story because her story has touched me on many different levels. Although I have never been bullied in such manners as what Riley has gone through, I have been bullied through technology. I have been made fun of and teased through social networking websites like Facebook and MySpace. I know what it is like to be surrounded by the mean girls and negativity in the middle school context, but also throughout life in general. I know what it feels like to be helpless and I am appalled and very saddened that



this takes place on an everyday basis for many school-aged children and there is not much is being done about it. I am passionate about the issue of technology and bullying and I feel very motivated to try to make a change.

As many of us know, bullying is an issue that is situated all across the United States and spans across all grade levels and ages. For my capstone project, I want to focus on technology and bullying as it is situated in the context of middle schools in local school. I would like to form a community partnership with a local middle school located in Marina, California. I have a school in mind for my community partnership and I am interested in this school and eager to see what anti-bullying programs they have in place, if any. I plan on forming this partnership and working with the principal and a few of the teachers.

Bullying is a problem that is in need of direct and immediate attention on middle school campuses because this is the age in which technology starts to play an active role in children's lives. Children start using computers on a more regular basis for research and the typing of schoolwork, but they also start using computers for recreation. This involves social networking, blogging, and chatting. This is also the age when most children receive their first personal cell phone, and most are equipped with text messaging. The technology can be used in a positive way, such as for educational purposes and positive communication, but the technology presented to children can also be used in many negative ways. The technology can be used for teasing, name-calling, personal threats, emotional abuse, and etcetera. There are many reasons why the issue of technology and bullying is urgent and needs to be addressed today. Cyberbullying is an urgent problem because the bullying is not face to face, and therefore school officials feel that it is not within their jurisdiction to handle the problem. So many children are being negatively affected by this problem and there is not much being done about it. If the problem is left

addressed, there are many short-term, but also long-term effects that contribute to the overall emotional health of our children. Some of the long-term effects of bullying are depression, lack of self-confidence, lack of self-worth, lack of self-esteem, and suicide.

As I continue to work and develop my capstone idea, I envision my capstone as a project that opens the door and people's eyes about technology and bullying. I hope that I can create an awareness program that could provide some new perspective to others that are also passionate about this issue. I want to create some kind of brochure, information presentation, or any other kind of multi-media project that could provide a course of action or just educate others about bullying.

## **Literature Review**

### **Technology and Bullying**

Bullying is a problem that is in need of immediate attention in our school systems today because of the short and long-term effects that it can have on students. Cyberbullying is an epidemic that is plaguing the nation, and there is not much that is being done in order to address the issue. Whether it is the anonymity of the intruder, or where the attack took place, but school staff feel that they do not have the platform or power to put a stop to the problem. Cyberbullying in middle schools is an urgent problem in direct need of attention for two important reasons: it is most prevalent throughout those three crucial years in a student's life, and there are detrimental effects that can affect how a student performs in their educational career as well as their personal and social life. In my literature review paper, I will summarize research that describes bullying and cyberbullying and the different forms and ways in which they occur among middle school students. I will also discuss the research and statistics on cyberbullying to demonstrate the nature and urgency of the problem in the middle school context. Finally, I will examine the potential interventions and solutions to address the problem of cyberbullying. The goal of this paper is to articulate, analyze and refine the nature of the problem of cyberbullying in the middle school context.

### **The Nature of Cyberbullying**

Bullying is an issue that affects many people on an everyday basis, can take many forms, and is found among individuals in all age groups and ethnicities. Name calling, teasing, physical and verbal abuse, slander, and cyberbullying are all various forms of bullying that take place in schools. The most prevalent form of bullying in the middle school context is cyberbullying. "Electronic bullying, online bullying, or cyberbullying" are all different ways to refer to this type

of bullying that is, generally, done anonymously and through some sort of screen like a computer or cellphone (Beale & Hall, 2007, p. 8). According to Del Siegle (2010), this new way of bullying can be executed in many different ways and is used to deliberately intimidate others anonymously through the use of cell phones, social networking sites, instant messaging, and chat rooms and is a form of “social aggression” using technology as its platform (p. 15). According to Siegle (2010), there are eight forms of cyberbullying (i.e. flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, and cyberstalking), making it clear that technology has created a complex venue through which youth can engage in social aggression with one another in the relative safety of anonymity behind a screen.

### **Cyberbullying in the Middle School Context**

Before I started my research for my literature review, I thought that cyberbullying only existed in the context of high schools where technology like cellphones, and the internet were more prevalent and, generally, more a part of everyday life. As stated in my Backstory piece, I chose middle school as the context for my capstone project because of my personal connection to the issue as it related to my cousins, Riley, experiences with cyberbullying. Surprisingly, what the research revealed is cyberbullying is actually the most prevalent during the middle school years for children (Beale & Hall, 2007).

Research shows the cyberbullying is in its peak in the middle school years and declines during the high school years (Bauman, 2010). The research shows that about 18% of students are bullied in a typical period of two months (Chibbaro, 2007). The research of Filippelli and colleagues (2007) shows us that somewhere between 20 and 33 percent of students, both high school and middle school students, report that they have been cyberbullied on at least one occasion. These statistics are astounding because this means that every 2 (or more) of 10 students

are bullied at least once in approximately 60 days. This statistic only covers cyberbullying in the middle school context and does not cover the other types of intimidation and bullying that also takes place on these campuses. The research done by Kowalski and Limber, as cited in Chibbaro's article School Counselors and the Cyberbully: Interventions and Implications (2007), states that 48% of the students "did not know the identity of the person who had cyberbullied them" (p. 66). Therefore, despite the prevalence of cyberbullying, it is difficult to address the problem because of the challenge of identifying the perpetrator(s) involved.

Another key idea presented in the research pointed out that many of the students who are targeted by cyberbullying tend to turn to cyberbully others; out of 53.2% of students being bullied, 41.3% of those students ended up bullying another person, student, friend, or sibling (Chibbaro, 2007). Del Siegle (2010), found that children placed in advanced courses were subject to name-calling and other bullying tactics, and 11% of these students resorted to bullying others through virtual communities. Surprisingly, these "bully-victims are those students who become bullies after being victimized" (Diamanduros et al., 2008, p. 694). Thereby intentionally inflicting on others the same kind of emotional pain and turmoil they themselves experienced.

The research shows that there are gender differences in cyberbullying (Del Siegle, 2010). For instance, Hoff and Mitchell (2008) found that girls are more likely to bully other girls, as opposed to boys, when participating in cyberbullying. The research shows that girls are generally more likely than boys to cyberbully, because of the emotional turmoil they themselves experiencing. Girls responded that the cyberbullying grew out of "intolerance" of others and girls bullied other girls because they wanted "to feel better about themselves, because they are small minded, because they want the other person to feel the misery or other feelings (scared, sad, isolated, helpless) that they themselves feel" (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008, p. 656). According to

Schoen and Schoen (2010), girls are generally targeted by both girls and boys when they are being bullied, but boys are generally just being bullied by other boys. This tells us that girls have the opportunity to be bullied more frequently than boys do.

The gender differences in bullying and being bullied between boys and girls suggests that boys and girls solve interpersonal problems differently throughout adolescence. Through my schooling, I have learned that boys have a problem-focused approach to solving a problem that suggests that they focus on thinking through options, rather than making rash decisions because they want to logically think through their decisions. On the other hand, girls have an emotion-focused approach to solving that suggests that girls tend to make their decisions based upon their feelings and experiences. I think that these approaches to solving interpersonal problems and issues could influence the way that boys and girls interact with each other, and engage in conflict with each other. Boys' problem focused approach rather than emotion-focused approach to conflict resolution may explain why boys are less inclined to solve the problem by bullying others through virtual communities, whereas girls might be quicker to turn to the virtual communities inflict emotional pain on others.

One consistency in the research is that there are eight distinct types of cyberbullying. The eight forms of cyberbullying include flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, and cyberstalking. All of the different forms involve types of direct or indirect social exclusion and can be "equally as devastating as traditional bullying" techniques (Schoen & Schoen, 2010, p. 71). Flaming is an indirect form of cyberbullying and it is an online fight "using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language" (Siegle, 2010, p. 15). Harassment, exclusion, and denigration are all types of direct cyberbullying because they are all used to intentionally and repeatedly put one down in order to damage a reputation (Siegle, 2010).

Impersonation is an indirect form of cyberbullying and is very easily executed using virtual communities because it is easy to create a façade in order to pretend to be someone else. Outing is a direct form of bullying and it is when someone shares “someone’s secrets or embarrassing information or images online” (Siegle, 2010, p. 15). Trickery is very similar to outing, but the only difference is that trickery is when one talks another person into sharing personal pictures and personal secrets. The last form of cyberbullying is cyberstalking and this is a direct form of bullying. Cyberstalking is a “repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear” (Siegle, 2010, p. 15).

There were many similarities across all of the research studies, but the differences lied in the way that the data was collected from the different students. Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were common ways of accepting knowledge and experiences from the students of the research. I thought that each of the data collecting methods were successful for each individual research article, but I think that there are positives and negatives to each method. Bullying is a sensitive subject for many students and it is especially sensitive during the middle school years. It is very likely that there are some inconsistencies, exaggerations, and withheld stories in all of the data collecting methods. We know that there has to be some holes in the research and that all of the data collected is not 100% correct because all of the studies were not collected in the same exact way. Peer pressure, ease of comfort, and a trusting environment are just some of the aspects that influence the way in which students answer and respond to the prompts given to them by the researchers.

### **Impact of Cyberbullying**

In addition to the prevalence of cyberbullying in early adolescence, and the varied and complex ways in which it takes place in middle school contexts, cyberbullying is a problem

because of the negative effects that it has on students' social and emotional well-being. Students who are bullied through a virtual platform are more likely to become depressed and suicidal (Chibbaro, 2007). Hinduja and Patchin (2010) state that whether one is the cyberbully victim, or the offender, both have lower levels of self-esteem because of "electronic forms of adolescent aggression" (p. 613). It is important to note that it is often assumed that because the cyberbullying does not take place face-to-face, it is not as detrimental to a child's self-esteem and self-worth as other forms of bullying, but the research points to the opposite. In fact, cyberbullying can be just as detrimental to a child as other forms of bullying, and children are more likely to be "bullied online" because children are generally unaware of the "potential risk of Internet predators" (Filippelli et al., 2010, p. 162). Cyberbullying is very detrimental to the well-being of the child and affects both the social and emotional aspects of the child.

### **Efforts to Address Cyberbullying and Their Effectiveness**

Given the prevalence, complexity, and detrimental effects of cyberbullying, researchers have explored possible preventions, treatments, and interventions to address cyberbullying, and have examined how well these types of programs work in order to put a stop to this specific form of bullying. Multi-level programs, awareness campaigns, school counseling interventions, creative stimulations, and student education are all possible interventions that are proposed throughout the research.

According to Schoen & Schoen (2010), there have been many different multi-level programs that have been "designed, implemented, and assessed with regard to effectiveness in preventing bullying at the elementary, middle, and high school levels" (p. 69). A multi-level program is targeted at the entire student body, rules are adopted by everyone, and a supervision system is set into place (Schoen & Schoen, 2010). In the classroom, students are held



accountable with implemented interventions and parents are included in the anti-bullying message that is conveyed at school. By incorporating the multi-level program schools are able to integrate the anti-bullying message (Schoen & Schoen, 2010, p. 70).

According to Chibbaro, awareness campaigns and school counseling programs are also very important and recommended (2007). Awareness campaigns are able to shine a light on the problem and issue in the context of middle schools, and student advocates, counselors, and consultants can play a pivotal role in the way that these campaigns are implemented in middle schools. School counseling programs are important in the way in which schools are able to function as a safe zone. Creative simulations and scenarios were suggested by one research study and the study highlighted the importance of creating these scenarios for “school-aged issues of the day, such as cyberbullying” (Burnham et al., 2009). The creative simulations and scenarios can be very helpful in the classroom because they can be used with little to no technology and it can be used as a classroom tool, can be used in small group settings (Burnham et al., 2009).

Last, but not least, student education is extremely important when talking about bullying and cyberbullying. Because technology is a new tool for students in the middle school years, the education about proper uses of the technology and virtual word are important tools to learn. Students should be taught proper internet etiquette and “internet bullying lessons” and those lessons should be integrated into the school’s curriculum” (Beale & Hall, 2007, p. 10).

I think that all of the possible preventions, treatments, and interventions are great ideas if followed through, but I think that there are some holes in all of the presented programs. I think that a great program would create a solid link a bond between home and school. The bond would include the principal, vice principal, school staff members, teachers, volunteers, and parents. Everyone would work together to create a strong foundation for cyberbullying and bullying

prevention. It could be a program that worked well in the home environment as well as the school environment. It would be a hard program to implement because it would need 100% effort from every single member, but I think that if it could be done that it would be an efficient program that would work to solve the problem of cyberbullying.

## **Conclusions**

As we can see from analyzing the research on cyberbullying in the middle school context, this is an issue that is in need of immediate attention in our school systems. And while there are some preventions, treatments, and interventions in place to try to handle the situation, we have seen that they are not always put into place successfully. Cyberbullying is most prevalent in the middle school years, and a lot of bully-victims turn around and bully others. The research also showed that girls are more likely to cyberbully other girls and girls are more likely to be bullied because they are generally bullied by both girls and boys. Cyberbullying comes in many forms as there are eight types of cyberbullying, and it is problematic because of the negative and detrimental effects that it has on students. Research on the nature of cyberbullying in middle schools reveals that it is a complex issue, and there are many factors that contribute to its occurrence in schools. Although there are many approaches for possible intervention techniques in schools, they are either not properly integrated, or not integrated at all in many school systems. Thus, the issue of cyberbullying requires immediate attention because of the short and long term effects on students.

## **Community Partnership**

### **Introduction**

As previously stated in my backstory piece and throughout the review of the literature, I am going to be focusing in on cyberbullying in the middle school context. The research shows that cyberbullying is an extremely important issue due to the anonymity and lack of face-to-face interactions that it entails. Cyberbullying has both short-term and long-term effects on the social and emotional well-being of students and it is an especially urgent issue because of its prevalence in middle schools. For my capstone project, I will be forming a community partnership with a locally-situated school in order to create a project that focuses on cyberbullying in this specific context.

### **Community Partnership Plans**

When I started to think about my community partner, I had originally planned on working with a charter school in San Jose, California that had curriculum geared towards tolerance and bullying. After talking with many different people, I thought that I should focus my project in a more locally situated school. I have paired up with fellow Capstone classmate, Jacklyn Rubio. Jacklyn's Capstone project is focusing on peer pressure and the transition into middle school. After talking, we realized that our topics have similarities that exist between the two separate topics. We knew that we could create a bigger and more influential project if we were able to intertwine our ideas together into one project to implement into the school.

We have decided to work with Los Arboles Middle School located in Marina, California. Jacklyn contacted the principal of the middle school, Xavier Rodriguez, and spoke to him about our desire to implement our Capstone project in his school. We have decided to work with the sixth grade classes because they are relatively new to the middle school experience. Although

Jacklyn and I are going to be doing one large Capstone project, we both have two separate topics and that will collaborate to create one set of curriculum to present to the sixth graders.

### **What I Plan To Learn**

After I meet up with different individuals at Los Arboles Middle School, I will have informants and a specific community partner who I will work with to implement my capstone project at the school. The information that I gather from my community partnership and informants will provide me with a very wide range of opinions and views on the issue of cyberbullying in the middle school context. I will use the opinions and views of my community partner when forming my capstone project. There are many questions that I will have answered by meeting with my community partner. I will know what issues the community faces in relation to cyberbullying and what specific experiences with cyberbullying my community partner has experienced. I will also know how effective the current curriculum is that is in place that works to out a stop to bullying on middle school campuses. After I gather all of this information from my community partner, I will then see what they feel should be done in order to solve the issues and roadblocks that cyberbullying presents in schools. I hope that by forming this partnership, I will create the connections and gather the information that I need to create a successful capstone project that will be beneficial for my project and the students of Los Arboles.

### **Project Collaboration**

Lastly, I want my community partnership to have mutual benefits for both parties involved. I hope that I will benefit from the experience and create a successful capstone project, but I also hope that Los Arboles Middle School will also benefit from the experience. My hope is that I will be able to create a project that could be carried on campus after Jacklyn and I are done.

I hope that my Capstone will be the starting point for effective cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs in Los Arboles Middle School.

### **Conclusions**

Cyberbullying is an extremely urgent topic that needs to be addressed in the middle school context because of its prevalence on middle school campuses today. Cyberbullying can have short-term and long-term effects on students and I hope that by creating a solid community partnership, I will form a strong and effective capstone project that will help to start solving this issue.

## **Project Plans**

### **Goals**

Upon completion of the Capstone research and Capstone notebook, I have narrowed in on what I want my capstone project to look like. I started out with a very broad topic and then found the issues. Now I am shaping my project into a workshop-based program that will work to address the issues in regards to cyberbullying in the middle school context. As I previously stated in my Community Partnership paper, I will be working on my Capstone project with fellow Capstone classmate, Jacklyn Rubio.

Jacklyn and I met up and we laid out what we want our Capstone project to look like. We both have very sensitive issues that arise during the middle school years and we feel that the best way to engage to the students is through a workshop-based awareness program. We want our program to be focused on the awareness of the issues and data provided through our research as well a program that is informative to the students. While working on our project, there are many milestones that we hope to accomplish. The first milestone that we hope to accomplish is to bring awareness of the issues related to cyberbullying and peer pressure. We would also like to bring light to the issues and touch the students on a more personal level. On a personal level, I hope all our hard work and preparation will pay off and our Capstone project will be a success.

### **Context**

I will be focusing in on my Capstone project in a locally situated school. Because I am working with a peer, my classmate and I will be working in Los Arboles Middle School which is located in Marina, California. Marina, California is neighboring the California State University Monterey Bay campus and is the home to a very diverse population. Residing in Marina, California is Los Arboles Middle School which is a part of the Monterey Peninsula School

District. As of right now, we are observing the sixth grade students at Los Arboles Middle School as a whole before we narrow in on a targeted group for our awareness program.

### **Participants**

The participants in our awareness program will be students in the sixth grade population as Los Arboles Middle School in Marina, California. We are working on observing the sixth grade students at Los Arboles Middle School. We hope are looking to observe the students before implementing our awareness program. After significant observation at Los Arboles Middle School, we will be working with all of the sixth grade students in order to ensure the most accurate outcome for our Capstone project. In other words, we will be accessing the entire sixth grade population as a whole before we decide on what information we will provide the students with.

### **Procedures**

1. We will be observing the students at Los Arboles Middle School in Marina, California. We are focused on the sixth grade students.
  - a. My role: During this procedure, my role is to observe the sixth grade students at Los Arboles in the classroom and in their social environment. My goal is to watch the students and to not alter how they spend their day-to-day life in the school.
  - b. Their role: During this procedure, our community partner has no role. They are to carry on as usual.
2. We will be creating a survey to hand out to the sixth grade students. We want to hand out a survey to each student in their home room and have the teacher facilitate this survey and collect it for us. The survey that we will hand out to the students will cover both Jacklyn and

my topics, cyberbullying and peer acceptance, in order to gain information from the participating students.

- a. My role: During this procedure, my role is to create a survey that will help us gain great knowledge from the students at Los Arboles. We will then create copies of the survey and hand out and distribute to the home room teachers.
  - b. Their role: During this procedure, the community partner will participate in the facilitation of the survey. They will pass out the survey to their students. They will allow the students an ample amount of time to take the survey and then they will collect the surveys and return to Jacklyn and I.
3. We will be analyzing the data that we collected from the surveys.
- a. My role: During this step in the process, Jacklyn and I will be analyzing the data that we collect from the students. We will be sorting the information and creating visuals, graphs, and charts that represent how the sixth grade students at Los Arboles Middle School filled out their surveys. The questions will be rated on a likert scale with room for the students to explain their answers.
  - b. Their role: The community partner has no role in this piece of the project.
4. We will be creating a workshop-based awareness project that we will deliver to sixth grade students at Los Arboles Middle School in Marina, California. We will be structuring our project based upon the results that we collected in Step #3.
- a. My role: We will be creating an awareness program that focuses on cyberbullying and peer pressure in the middle school context. We will be incorporating the information that we researched about in our literature review papers as well as the information and data that we collected from the students themselves.



- b. Their role: We will be meeting with our community partner this week to show them our finalized project. We will go over the details as well as the implementation of the project. We will be asking the community partner if there is anything that they would also like to include.
- 5. We will be effectively presenting our project to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students of Los Arboles Middle School in Marina, California.
  - a. My role: During this procedure, I will make sure to make the information and presentation assessable to the students as well as bring light to the issues of cyberbullying and peer pressure. I hope to successfully convey the importance of these issues in the middle school context.
  - b. Their role: During this procedure, the community partner will be able to actively participate in the program as well as let us use a specified amount of class time with their students.
- 6. We will obtain information and feedback from the students who participated in our awareness program at Los Arboles Middle School.
  - a. My role: During this procedure, my role is to create a short question that will guide the students thinking about the information and issues that Jacklyn and I will present during our presentation
  - b. Their role: During this procedure, the community partner will obtain the short written reflection from the students. They will collect these writing and hold onto them for Jacklyn and I.

### **Student Survey**

Jacklyn and I decided to survey the sixth grade population at Los Arboles Middle School and ask them a few short questions about many different aspects of their experiences with peer

pressure and cyberbullying. We will use the information that we gathered from the students to formulate our workshop-based presentation to these students. The survey will also provide us with important data about our Capstone topics. The surveys were based on a likert scale and also provided room for the students to explain their choices. The survey that Jacklyn and I created and presented to the sixth graders at Los Arboles (See Appendix A for complete Student Survey).

Weeks prior to our return to Los Arboles, Jacklyn and I distributed a survey to the sixth grade population to discover their involvement and knowledge of peer acceptance and cyberbullying. After tallying and graphing the results, we wanted to return to the school to deliver the results and findings to the students (See Appendix B for complete Survey Results). We wanted the assemblies to provide the students and teachers with the information that we had gathered. The assemblies were collaborative between Jacklyn and I and we molded our topics together to create one informative presentation for the students.

The first half of the survey focused on Jacklyn's Capstone topic, peer acceptance, and the second half of the survey focused on my Capstone topic, cyberbullying. All of the results that I received from the surveys were very interesting and most of the information gathered supported my research. The first question on the survey in regards to bullying asked "Are you aware of any type of bullying that takes place on campus?" I was surprised when I tallied up the results and saw that the results were split down the middle. When I created the question, I thought that it would be one way or the other, but did not assume that it would be so split. This was an interesting question, but there was one question that particularly sparked my interest. The question asked the students "In regards to bullying, which of the following best applies to you?" The students had to option of choosing: the bully, the victim, the bully and the victim, or neither.

I chose to ask this question to the sixth grade students of Los Arboles because my research stated that most students who are the victim of bullying turn around and bully others making them the bully and the victim. The results of the survey aligned with the research and have shown that more students have been the bully and the victim as opposed to being the bully or the victim. I thought that this was particularly interesting because it aligned so closely with my research.

### **Project Deliverables**

As we work to complete our capstone project, we will be collecting a set of deliverables and “evidence” that will work to show our time, progress, and program at Los Arboles Middle School. Throughout the weeks, we will be collecting surveys and a written reflection from the sixth grade students. We will be taking the data that we collect and we will be forming charts and visuals based upon the knowledge that we receive from the students. Jacklyn and I will be able to show the lesson plan for our workshop as a part of our deliverable. Our deliverables will document our time at Los Arboles Middle School. It will include all the various pieces that we collect through the various stages and procedures of our Capstone project: project survey, results of the survey, lesson plans and short-answer written responses from the students. See Appendix C for complete Assembly Lesson Plan.

### **Project Timeline**

<u>Week and Date</u>	<u>Project Tasks and Activities that will completed by the end of the projected week</u>
Week #8: Week of March 18, 2011	Create a Survey
Week #9: Week of April 1, 2011	Survey Students

Week #10: Week of April 8, 2011	Analyze Feedback
Week #11: Week of April 15, 2011	Create Awareness Program
Week #12: Week of April 22, 2011	Present Awareness Program Obtain Written Reflections
Week #13: Week of April 29, 2011	Assess Capstone Project
Week #14: Week of May 6, 2011	Capstone Notebook
Week #15: Week of May 13, 2011	Prepare Capstone Podium Presentation

### Assessment

For my Capstone project, I focused on cyberbullying as it pertains to students in the middle school context. I have conducted all of my research and have decided to work closely with my Capstone classmate, Jacklyn Rubio. We have decided to work together and plan a project that we can work together on in Los Arboles Middle School in Marina, California. Jacklyn and I have teamed up because our capstone topics are similar and pertain to the same set of students.

After formulating our workshop-based presentation and presenting it to the sixth grade students, we will leave them with questions that they will have time to respond to. The students will be given a blank notecard that they will be able to respond on anonymously. See Appendix D for post-assembly student questions. We will facilitate the understanding of the provided questions and will give the students a designated amount of time to answer the questions at the end of the presentation. We will then collect the responses to see what the students learned from the presentation. We will also be able to see if the issues we brought up changed anyone's opinion on peer pressure and cyberbullying in the middle school context.

At the conclusion of our project, Jacklyn and I will present a short survey to our community partners that they will be able to use to assess our effectiveness in the classrooms and our Capstone projects. (See Appendix E for complete Post-Assembly Teacher Survey.) They will be able to grade our performance and be able to give feedback on the positives and negatives of our presentation in their classrooms. I hope that they will be able to provide us with many ways that our project was successful, but still be able to point out ways that it could be improved.

## Results

Upon completion of our Capstone project with the sixth grade students at Los Arboles Middle School, Jacklyn and I were pleasantly surprised with the results that we received. We met with Los Arboles Middle School Principal, Xavier Rodriguez, and four of the sixth grade teachers. We collaborated with the teachers and planned four separate workshop-based assemblies that would encompass all of the sixth grade students. There were eight sixth grade teachers and about two-hundred and fifty students, so each assembly included two teachers and their classes. The teachers and staff were incredibly organized and welcoming and Jacklyn and I were able to execute four assemblies successfully.

In order to assess the students' knowledge and our effectiveness, Jacklyn and I provided the students with questions that pertained to our individual topics. My individual reflection question asked the students to put themselves in the shoes of someone who has been bullied and to explain how they would feel. The results of the post-assembly short answer questions were very interesting and demonstrated to me that the students gained understanding of the issues from our presentation. One student wrote, "If I was bullied, I would feel hurt inside and outside. The reason why I would feel this way is because the bully would have hurt me." Another student wrote, "I would feel like running away from town and if I was bullied a lot I would feel like taking my own life." The responses that we received from the students were overwhelming. The students were able to engage themselves in the issues and information that we provided them with and were able to put themselves in the shoes of someone who has been bullied. I also received responses from students who indicated that they have been bullied and they were able to provide a first-hand account of what they feel like. One particular student wrote, "If I were the victim of bullying (which I am on a daily basis) I feel like I'm useless, stupid, nerdy, ugly,

annoying, and worthless. I feel like I don't even care about my life anymore.” The student responses demonstrate that we successfully delivered the survey results and information to the students, but that we also were able to touch the students on a personal level.

Upon concluding our Capstone project at Los Arboles Middle School, Jacklyn and I received feedback from various staff members at Los Arboles. We presented the staff with a post-assembly survey to fill out and return. (See Appendix E for Post-Assembly Teacher Survey) Although we did not receive any of the surveys back from the teachers and staff at Los Arboles, the teachers, principal, and counselors were pleased and happy with how creatively we had decided to present our research and the results of the survey to their students. Many teachers also commented on how nice it was that our survey and statistics could help them meet their own standards. Sixth grade language arts teacher, Lucille Standifer wrote us and stated, “Both the students and teachers benefited from your excellent research, survey results, presentation, and follow ups” and “The students enjoyed and related to your presentation.” Jacklyn and I are pleased with how our individual topics came together to create a great collaboration project. Jacklyn and I had a great overall experience working with Los Arboles Middle School as our community partner. The partnership and final Capstone project exceeded our expectations.

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**Appendices**

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## Appendix A: Student Survey

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank You for your participation. This survey will be used for our college senior capstone project. All information you provide will be completely anonymous. In order for us to achieve the best results please be honest with your answers.*

### 1. Did you have any difficulties transitioning into middle school?

On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your transition into middle school. Circle your answer and explain.

Difficult    1    2    3    4    5    Easy

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Now that you are in middle school, how do you feel you are doing academically?

Circle your answer and explain why.

- a. I am doing better academically since middle school
- b. I am doing worse academically, I did better in elementary school
- c. Nothing has changed since elementary school

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Are you still friends with peers from elementary school? Please circle yes or no.

Yes                      No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Since starting middle school, have you developed new friendships? Please circle yes or no.

Yes                      No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. What different clichés (groups of friends) exist on campus? List the different clichés that you are aware of?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**6. On a scale of 1-5 how important is popularity (peer acceptance) to you?** Circle one.

Not important    1       2       3       4       5       Very Important

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Are you aware of any type of bullying that takes place on campus?** Please circle yes or no.

Yes                      No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. In regards to bullying, which of the following best applies to you?**

- a. I've been the bully.
- b. I've been the bully and I've been the victim.
- c. I've been the victim.
- d. I've never been involved. I've never been the bully nor the victim.

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Are you affiliated with any social networking media? (MySpace, Facebook, etc).** Please circle yes or no.

Yes                      No

Which social networking sites are you apart of? \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Do you have a cell phone?** Please circle yes or no.

Yes                      No

**11. Other than face to face, have you ever been bullied through social networking sites, cell phones (text messages) or instant messaging?** Please circle yes or no.

Yes                      No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. One a scale of 1 to 5, how familiar are you with what cyber bullying is?**

Not familiar       1       2       3       4       5       Familiar

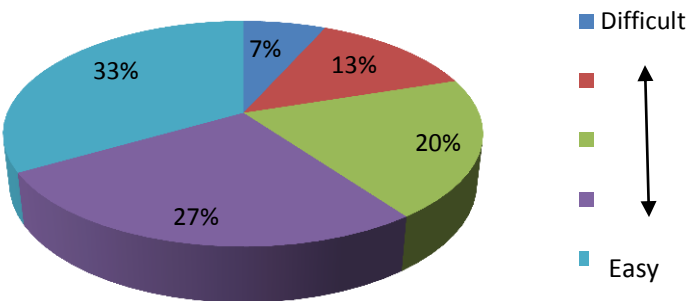
Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

*If you have any thoughts, comments, questions, please feel free to include them below:*

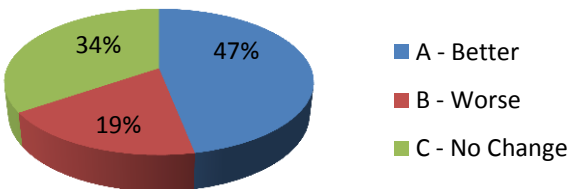
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\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B: Survey Results

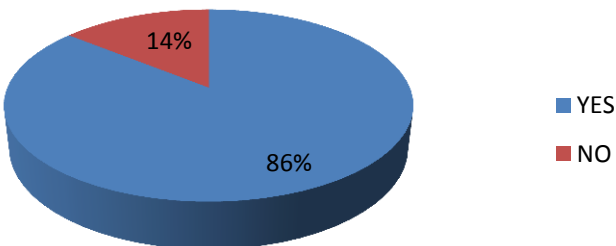
**#1. Did you have any difficulties transitioning into middle school?**



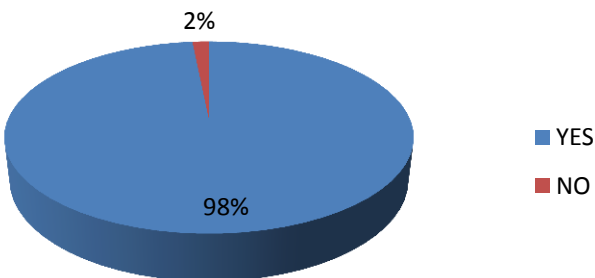
**#2. Now that you are in middle school, how do you feel you are doing academically?**



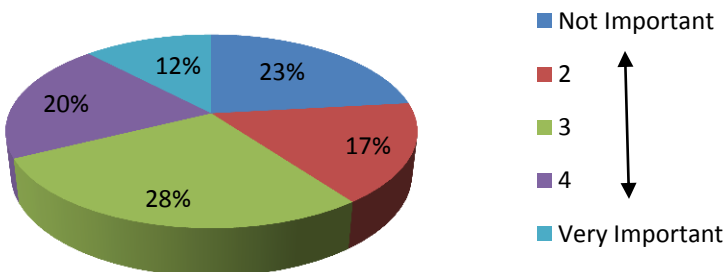
**#3. Are you still friends with peers from elementary school?**



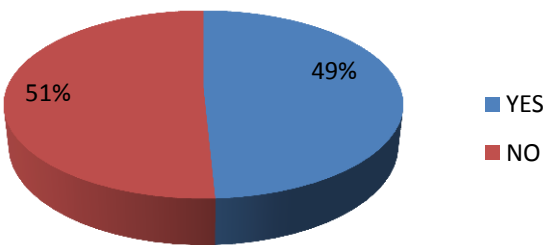
**#4. Since starting middle school, have you developed new friendships?**



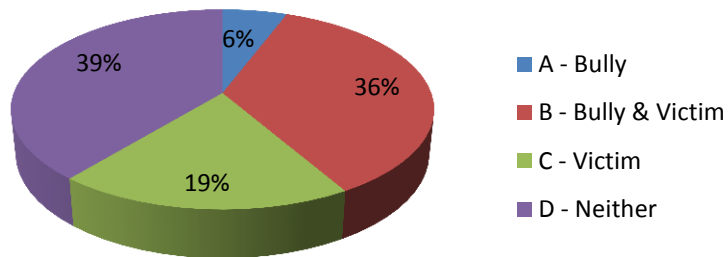
**#6. On a scale of 1-5 how important is popularity (peer acceptance) to you?**



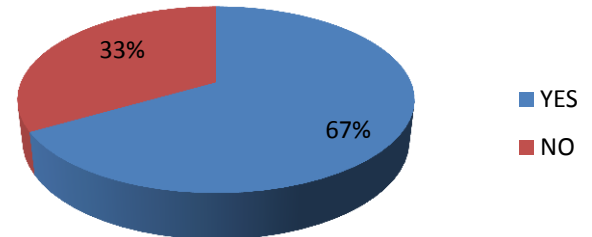
**#7. Are you aware of any type of bullying that takes place on campus?**



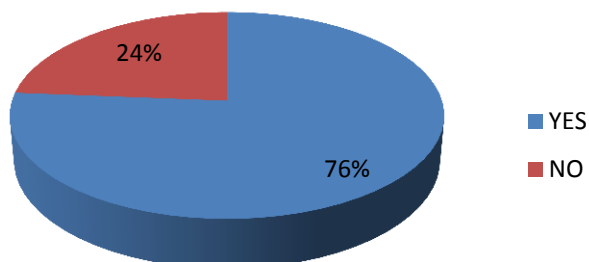
**#8. In regards to bullying, which of the following best applies to you?**



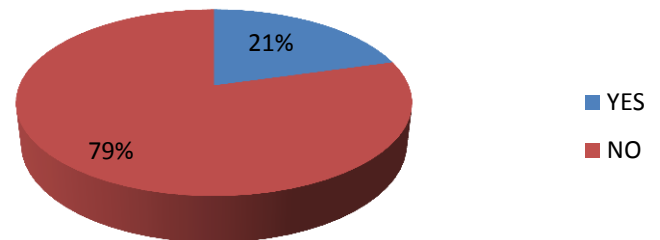
**#9. Are you affiliated with any social networking media? (MySpace, Facebook, etc).**



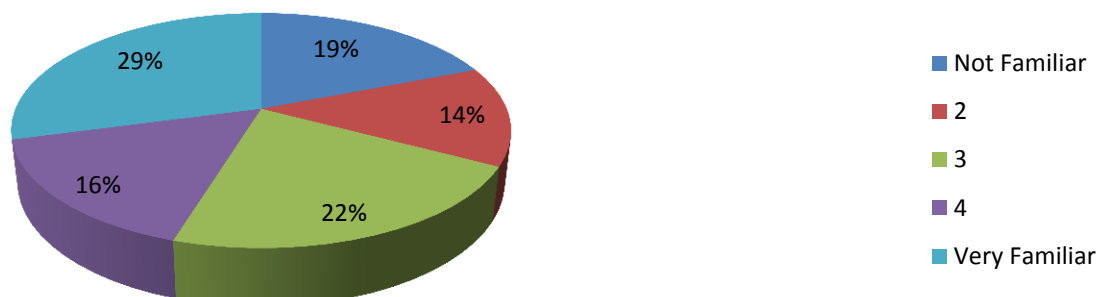
**#10. Do you have a cell phone?**



**#11. Other than face to face, have you been bullied through social networking sites, cell phones, or instant messaging?**



**#12. On a scale of 1 to 5, how familiar are you with what cyberbullying is?**



### **Appendix C: Assembly Lesson Plan**

**Materials:** Dry Erase Boards, Dry Erase Makers, Access to computer with overhead projector

**Total Time (25min)**

#### **-Introductions (2-3min)**

- Hey guys thank you so much for participating. I bet you are all wondering why you are here. Last week we had your teachers give you all a survey, THANK YOU so much for those who participated.

-A brief introductions of who we are... (our individual introductions)

-We read ALL the surveys and comments; one of the most frequently asked question was “WHY LOS ARBOLES?”

- **School (CSUMB)**
- **Understand the community**
- **Our Senior projects focus on middle school students**

-The purpose of this assembly is to talk to you all about some of the changes that you have been experiencing since entering middle school. Some things may not be new issues, but issues that become more prevalent when exposed to larger number of new students. Some of the issues we really want to cover today were addressed in the survey that you all took. These topics include peer relationships, bullying, cyber bullying etc.











-We want all of you to have a fun time so we came up with some ideas for activities/games that we want to engage you in. We will be asking you guys for your participation in some of the activities. Your full participation will be greatly appreciated. We do have some prizes for those who participate.

-For our first activity we want to see how you think your peers answered the questions on our survey. We are going to ask you all a series of questions and you will be asked to respond based on how you think your peers responded (not necessarily how you personally responded). Alright let's start!

#### **“What do you think?” (8min)**

-For this activity the facilitator will ask a series of questions that the students will answer by raising either 1 finger or 5. The questions will mostly be in regards to the survey that they took the previous week. When asked a question the students will answer based on how they felt their peers answered. The question will be followed by asking the students to look around and see the

variety of responses. After each question, the facilitator will give the students the results of the

STARTING LINE									
1 	2 	3 	4 	5 	6 	7 	8 	9 	10 
↓ X	↓ X	↓ X	↓ X	↓ X	↓ X	↓ X	↓ X	↓ X	↓ X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FINISH LINE									

survey question and a brief explanation of issue that the question addresses.

(Transition into next activity)

### **“Crossing the Line” (10min)**

Ask for 6-10 student participants. Have the contestants come stand at the front. Each student will be handed a dry erase board. The object of the game is to cross the finish line first. Players will be asked questions then they will have a few seconds to write their answers on their boards. When prompted, the students will show their answers, if correct they will advance to the next space. Keep asking questions until at least three students reach the finish line.

### **Final Conclusion (3min)**

Thank you all for your participation. At the end of the day we want to emphasize that you all are in control of your actions. You can choose not to do the right thing. We want you all to fill out this response card. We will use this feedback as part of the rest of our research.

1. Explain what type of issues you may have had when adjusting to middle school. What types of things were you worried about when you started middle school?
2. Write down on your note card what you can do to prevent cyber bullying. Also, put yourself in the shoes of someone who has been bullied, and explain how you would feel.



Questions for “What Do You Think?” Game!**1. BULLYING QUESTION: Are you aware of any type of bullying that takes place on campus?**

Question: On the surveys we asked you if you were aware or noticed any on campus. Look around and base your answer upon what you believe the majority of your PEERS answered. So please raise 5 fingers if you believe that MORE than 50% of the students answered with a yes (they see bullying taking place on campus) or give us your 1 finger if you think that LESS than half of the students said that they do not see bullying taking place on campus.

Answer: This one was really close, almost 50-50 and spilt down the middle, but your answers show us that the majority of students do not see bullying taking place of campus.

Follow up response: When most students thought about the bullying they witnessed on campus, most people thought and responded with verbal bullying and face to face confrontations. Although these are the most commonly known forms of bullying, there are MANY others ways that one can bully and intimidate another person. Flaming, Harassment, Denigration, Stalking (Cyberstalking), Impersonation, Outing, Trickery, and Exclusion are the eight different types of bullying.

Flaming is when one person sends angry or vulgar messages to a party or person privately or to an online group. Harassment is intended and repetitive offensive behavior. Denigration is sending or speaking harmful, untrue, and cruel statements about a person to other people. Stalking and cyberstalking is a form of harassment that includes threats of harm and is highly intimidating. Impersonation also known as masquerading is pretending to be another person through the virtual platform (Facebook, instant messaging, chat rooms, etc). Outing and trickery are very similar and it involves engaging others to say or post another person's private information. Exclusion is an action that specifically and intentionally excludes another person from a group.

Although face to face confrontations and verbal bullying are the most obvious forms of bullying, there are many other types and ways to bully a person that can sometimes be very hard to see. Sometimes students do not realize they are bullying a peer because it is not physical, but sometimes the emotional bullying can be more detrimental than physical bullying.

**2. CYBER BULLYING QUESTION: On a scale of 1 to 5, how familiar are you with what cyber bullying is?**

Question: On the surveys we asked you how familiar you all were with what cyber bullying is. Look around at the peers that surround you. Do you think that more (or less) than 50% of the students in your class are familiar with what cyber bullying is? If you think that MORE than half

of the students here today know what cyber bullying is then give us a 5 fingers and if you think that LESS than half of the students present know what cyber bullying is, then show us your 1 finger.

Answer: If you answered with 5 fingers, then you are correct. According to the surveys that you guys answered, more than half of the participating students are aware and familiar with cyber bullying is.

CYBER BULLYING= is the most prevalent form of bullying found in the middle school context. It is preformed through some sort of screen (like a computer or a cell phone). And often times, cyber bully attacks are done anonymously. Cyber bullying is a form of “social aggression” that uses technology as its platform. Cyber bullying is similar to bullying because it is used to deliberately intimidate others, but instead of face to face, it can be done through the use of cell phones, social networking sites, instant messaging, and chat rooms.

### **3. TRANSITION QUESTION:**

Question: On the survey we asked you all if you had any difficulties transitioning into middle school. How do you think your peers answered the question? If you think your peers had a difficult time raise your 1 finger, if you think that your peers had an easy time give me 5 fingers.

Answer: Your results show that 71% of you did not experience any difficulties. Now this question may have been difficult to understand. What we meant by difficulties, was did you have a hard time adjusting, were you scared or anxious about middle school, did you feel that you were going to be lost, etc.

### **4. FRIENDSHIP QUESTION:**

Question: On the survey we asked you if you had made new friendships since entering middle school. Raise 1 finger if you think your peers answered yes or raise 5 fingers if you think your peers answered no.

Answer: Your results show that 98% of you answered yes.

### **5. PEER RELATIONSHIP QUESTION:**

Question: On the survey we asked if you thought popularity was important. Raise 1 finger if you think your peers answered this with a yes, and raise 5 fingers if you think your peers said no.

Answer: Majority of you answered on the scale that indicates that popularity is in fact important to you all.

Questions for “Crossing The Line” Game!

- How many different types of bullying exist?
  - **There are EIGHT different types of bullying.**
- Which of the following is NOT a type of bullying?
  - a) Outing
  - b) Intergration**
  - c) Denigration
  - d) Stalking
- True OR False: Stalking and cyberstalking is a form of exclusion that is not very harmful to the victim.
  - **FALSE: Stalking and cyberstalking is a form of harassment that includes threats of harm and is highly intimidating.**
- True OR False: All types of bullying are visible and noticeable to outsiders?
  - **FALSE: There are many types of bullying. Physical bullying is visible and noticeable to outsiders, but emotional bullying is much harder for outsiders to notice.**
- True OR False: Exclusion specifically and intentionally excludes another person from a group.
  - **TRUE: Exclusion is an action that specifically and intentionally excludes one person (or a group of people) from another group of people.**
- Cyber bullying is:
  - a) Not found in middle schools
  - b) The most prevalent form of bullying in the middle school context**
- Cyberbullying is a form of:
  - a) “Social aggression”**
  - b) Peer pressure

- c) Face to face bullying
- Cyberbullying is bullying through social platforms. Which one is NOT considered to be cyber bullying?
  - a) Bullying through cell phones
  - b) Bullying through social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace, etc)
  - c) **Bullying face to face**
  - d) Bullying through instant messaging and chat rooms
- True OR False: There are many ways that one person can bully another.
  - **TRUE: There are eight different forms of bullying and the cyber bullying is the most prevalent form of bullying in the middle school context.**
- True OR False: Bullying is used to deliberately intimidate others.
  - **TRUE: Bullying (and cyber bullying) are used to deliberately intimidate others.**
- True or False: Upon entering middle school you are not exposed to a wider variety of people?
  - **FALSE**
- True or False: Most students want to be accepted by their peers.
  - **TRUE**
- True or False: Upon entering middle school, most students develop new friends?
  - **TRUE**

**Appendix D: Post-Assembly Short Answer Questions**

1. Explain what type of issues you may have had when adjusting to middle school. What types of things were you worried about when you started middle school?
2. Write down on your note card what you can do to prevent cyber bullying. Also, put yourself in the shoes of someone who has been bullied, and explain how you would feel.

